~~THE~~ KLAMATH BASIN PROJECT
"A" Canal Headworks House
500 Nevada Street
Klamath Falls
Klamath County
Oregon

HAER No. OR-90-A

HAER
ORE
18-KLAFA,
1A-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
Columbia Cascades Support Office
National Park Service
909 First Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98104-1060

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Location: "A" Canal Headworks House
500 Nevada Street, Klamath Falls, Oregon

U.S.G.S. 15 minute Klamath Falls, Oregon quadrangle
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 10.598820.4676760

Date of Construction: 1907

Architect: Unknown

Builder: United States Government, Reclamation Service (Bureau of Reclamation)

Present Owner: Bureau of Reclamation
6600 Washburn Way
Klamath Falls, Oregon 97603

Present Use: Abandoned, to be demolished 1998

Significance: This house is among the first constructed by the Federal government in developing the Klamath Basin Project. The A Canal and it's headworks are the first Federal diversion from Upper Klamath Lake. The A Canal is pivotal to the development of the irrigation system and the agricultural economic base operating within the Klamath Basin. The A Canal Headworks House served as the residence for workers who controlled releases into the A Canal.

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I. DESCRIPTION

Klamath Falls, Oregon is an agricultural and timber community located in south-central Oregon at the center of the Klamath Basin. The surrounding area is characterized by Basin and Range topography with large lakes or drainage sumps representing remnants of Pleistocene lakes. Former volcanic activity evident in cones and rugged mountain systems. The floor of the basin stands at just over 4,000 feet. The high, dry climate averages approximately 13 inches of rainfall and is characterized by cold winters and mild summers. The winter weather is cold with an average low temperature of nearly 20 degrees fahrenheit. Summers are mild.

The vegetation of the basin is related to soils and available water. Higher elevations are forested, dominated by Ponderosa pine to the north. Lava flows are barren while the plains contain various mixtures of bunch grass, sage brush, and juniper. Meadows and marshes are present along portions of waterways and in sump areas. Modern agriculture dominates the landscape and individual ranches are scattered throughout the basin.

The A Canal Headworks House lies approximately 50 feet north of the A Canal Headworks (Photos 1 and 2), situated at the far southern end of Upper Klamath Lake (Figure 1). In addition to the house, the site contains a carriage house and small barn. A contemporary shade ramada, built within the last 20 years has been removed. A fence has been constructed around the housing area (Figure 2).

Built in 1907, the A Canal Headworks House, is a single story rectangular structure (Photo 3) placed on a raised block foundation (Figure 3). A rear addition of a utility room and bathroom were added after the original construction (Photo 4). The screened in front porch dates to the original construction, although sheets of chip board have been nailed to the lower portion of the porch. All windows and door openings to the house and porch have been boarded up with sheets of plywood to discourage vandalism.

The exterior of the A Canal Headworks House consists of medium width clapboards that overlap. The gable roof is covered with cedar shingles. The roof of the rear addition is lower than the original, but consistent in design and form. The roof trim is a plain boxed cornice with the eaves and rafters enclosed (Photo 5).

The windows are flat rectangular structural openings with plain moldings and plain sills. The windows contain two sashes with one pane per sash. The lower panes are single hung, slide up and down. The windows in the add-on are different. The rear window consists of two sashes

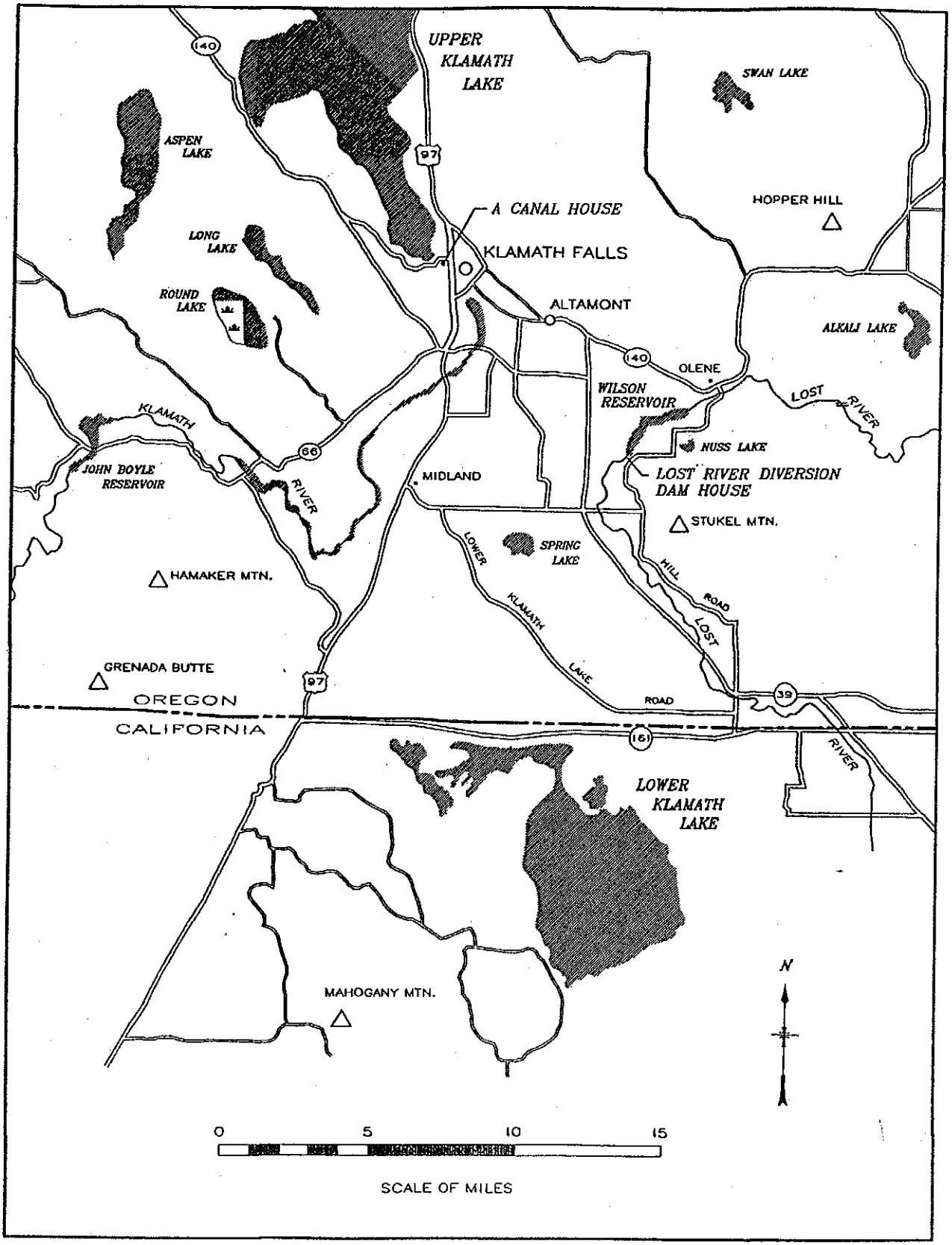

Figure 1 Regional location of the A Canal and Lost River Diversion Dam houses.

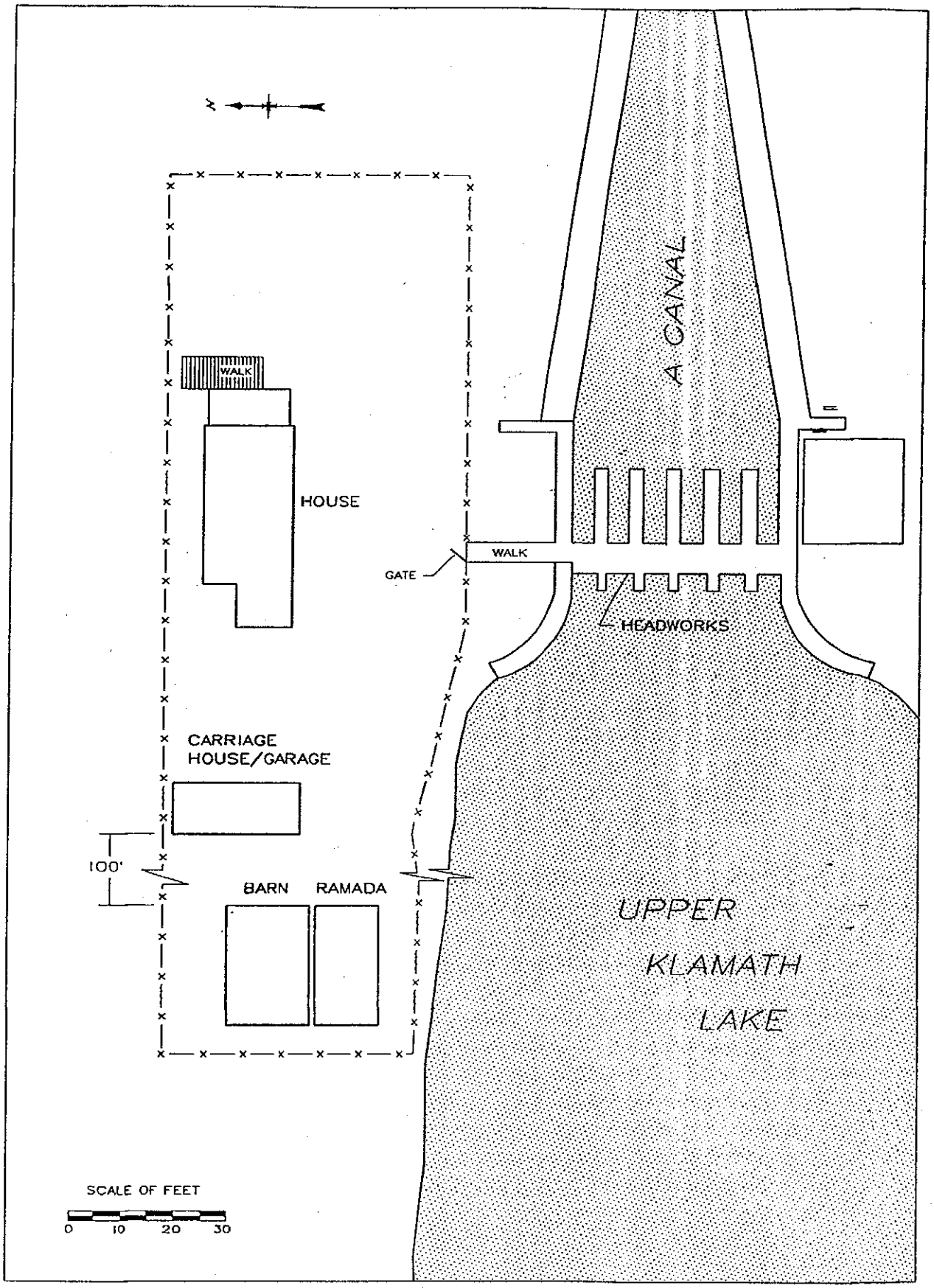

Figure 2. Overview of the A Canal Headworks complex.

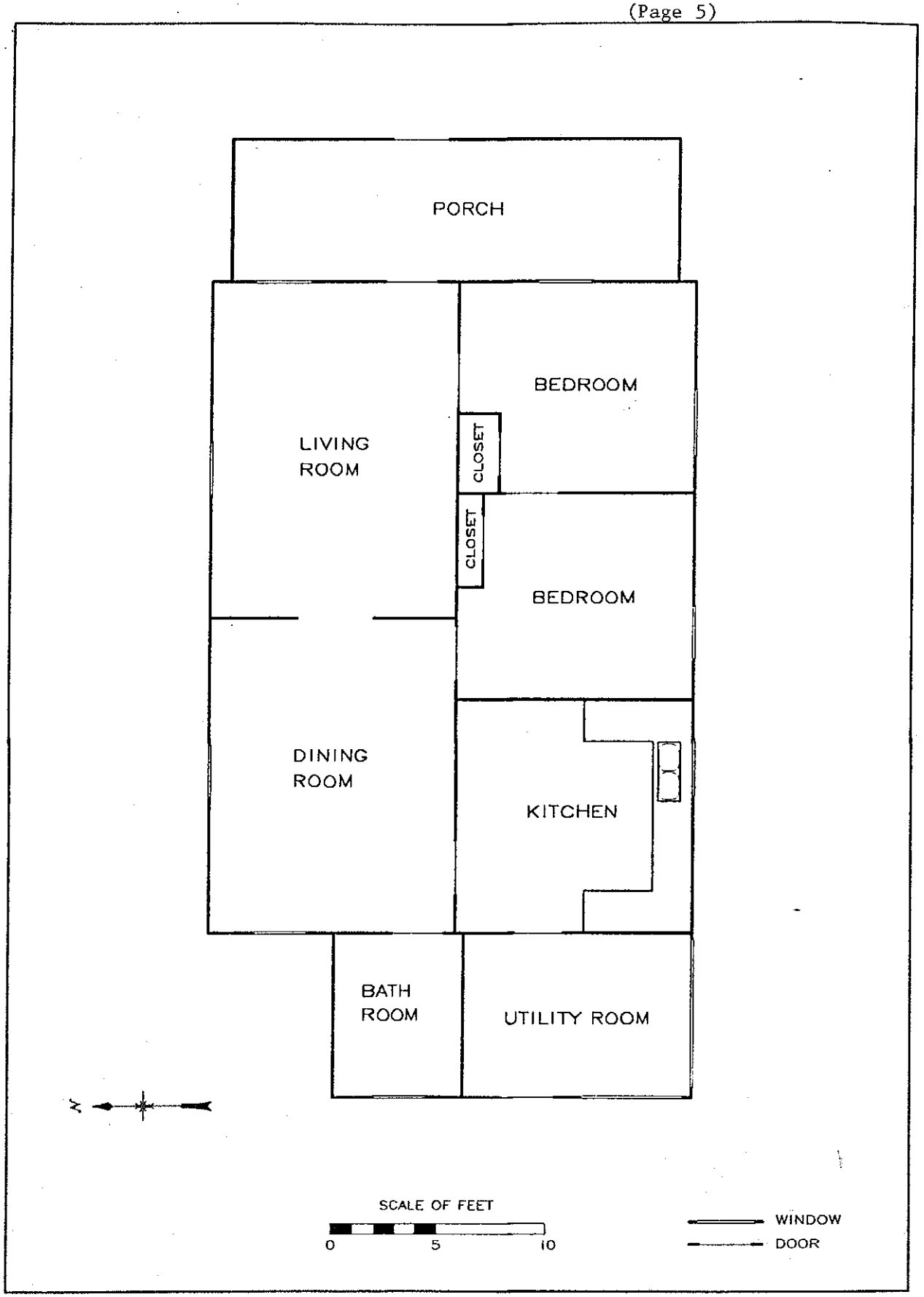

Figure 3 Floor Plan of the A-Canal Headworks House.

side by side with two panes per sash. These also slide up and down. The south side windows are fixed and consist of three side-by-side windows with two sashes and one pane per sash.

The front door is centered on the gable with symmetrical window placement on either side. This opening is flat with plain molding and trim. The front door is wood in three section with half the door being a single pane of glass. Interior doorways are plain with trim protruding from the wall by approximately one-half inch. The entry way is flush with the floor of the porch which is also flush with he ground surface. The rear entrance, off the utility room is accessible by a two step landing (Photo 6).

The outbuildings lie due west of the A Canal Headworks house. The carriage house (Photo 7), located 30 feet from the A Canal Headworks House, is a frame structure covered by clapboards. The gabled roof is covered by cedar shingles. The entrance of this structure has been modified by widening the opening with a circular saw. Rafters are not enclosed, but are visible beneath the eaves. The age of this structure is unknown.

A two-story barn lies approximately 140 feet due west of the A Canal Headworks House (Photo 8). The barn is constructed in a similar fashion to the carriage house. It has a large sliding door that provides access to the ground floor and a hinged portal that provides access to the upper floor. The age of the barn is unknown.

Operation of the A Canal Headworks House was under the direct control of the Federal government until 1954. The Bureau of Reclamation entered into an agreement with the Klamath Irrigation District to operate and maintain portions of the Klamath Project. Management of the house transferred to the water district. Use of the A Canal House for water management continued until 1983 when automation eliminated the need for an on-site caretaker. The residence continued to be used as a rental and was occupied as recently as 1995. Management of the house returned to the Bureau of Reclamation in 1996.

This house and the Lost River Diversion Dam House were determined eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. A memorandum of agreement was prepared and entered into by Reclamation, the Oregon State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to mitigate adverse impacts from the demolition of these houses. This HAER documentation completes the stipulations of the MOA.

II. HISTORIC INFORMATION

Occupation of the Klamath Basin was encouraged by a series of Federal incentives to provide land to settlers. The Preemptive Act, 1862 Homestead Act, and the Swamp Land Act all sparked

interest in the basin and elsewhere in the West. Settlement, however, remained sparse until after conclusion of the Modoc War in 1873. An excellent discussion of Klamath Basin history is provided in Fagan (1994).

Ranching, logging and farming became the main economic pursuits in the Klamath Basin, although settlements were wide spread and business developments were slow. Linkville (later changed to Klamath Falls), was the first community in the Klamath Basin and held a population of only 384 in 1885.

Early farmers recognized that the region's agricultural potential was limited by low precipitation. Several early irrigation canals were completed to provide reliable water to limited areas. The 1878 Ankeny Canal served residents of Linkville. This canal, purchased several years later, was expanded 15 miles into the Klamath Valley. At peak operation this canal irrigated approximately 4,000 acres (Voorhees 1913). Several additional canals were in operation either draining lower Klamath Lake or working a saw and flour mill at Link River (Fagan 1994) near Klamath Falls. Ultimately, rights to all existing canals were acquired by the Federal government.

The 1902 Newlands Reclamation Act prompted the United States Reclamation Service (Bureau of Reclamation) to investigate potential agricultural area across the West. Government surveyors examined the Klamath Basin in 1903 and the system envisioned at that time continues to this day. The Klamath Project includes a 50-square-mile area featuring canals and drains to irrigate Klamath and Lost River Valleys and reclamation of Lower Klamath and Tule Lakes. Additional portions of the Klamath Project were added later.

The U.S. Secretary of Interior approved the Klamath Project on May 15, 1905 and $4.4 million was appropriated for construction (Voorhees 1913). Interest in the government's participation in this irrigation program ran high. Local ranchers and farmers formed the Klamath Water Users' Association to serve as the entity to repay government expenses. Shares in the association were assessed to subscribers based on acreage. Two million dollars was raised (Voorhees 1913).

The first construction phase of the Klamath Project involved building the Main or A Canal. The route of this canal followed, in part, the existing Akeny-Henly Canal, as it was called in 1906. Completion of the A Canal was delayed as the government was required to meet water deliveries from the existing Akeny-Henly Canal (Stene n.d.). Project Engineer D. W. Murphy directed the contract of Mason, Davis & Company to excavate the first nine miles of the A Canal (Voorhees 1913). The canal was initially placed into operation on June 27, 1907.

The canal required considerable attention in order to regulate flows through the headworks. Gates were operated by hand to adjust flows into the canal system. The Reclamation Service

built a five-room house to serve as the residence of the gate tender. This structure, a tool house, well and pump, as well as other outbuilding cost $1,136.29 (Voorhees 1913).

The A Canal House was used for decades as the residence for the worker who regulated water flows. Sometime after it's 1906 construction, the house received an indoor bathroom and a back porch. A carriage house and small, two story barn were also constructed after 1906. Historic photos from 1906 show the house under construction (Photos 9 and 10). After automation of the A Canal headworks in 1983, the house continued to serve as a private residence, rented by the Klamath Irrigation District.

Implementation of additional portions of the Klamath Project continued after completion of the A Canal. Branches of the A Canal began, although labor and other problems delayed completion of the B Canal until 1912.

The A Canal House represents the beginning of Reclamation's involvement in the Klamath Basin. The house portrays the old technology of manual control of water releases. It is the first housing structure built to support development and management of the Klamath Project. The A Canal House was used to house the workers who controlled releases into the A Canal for three-quarters of a century. The house serves as reminder of the Federal involvement that led to settlement and growth of the Klamath Basin.

The irrigation facilities of the Klamath Project are physical representations of Federal programs designed to settle the western states. The A Canal House played a small part in the overall success of the Klamath Project, but the A Canal serves as the foundation for much of the irrigation that has taken place in the Klamath Basin.

III. References:

Fagan, John Cultural Resources Inventory and Site Testing Plans for the Proposed Pacific Gas Transmission Company's Medford Extension. Archeological Investigations Northwest, Inc. Report No. 47. Unpublished manuscript, 1994.

Steene, Eric The Klamath Project History (Draft). Unpublished manuscript being finalized by Bureau of Reclamation, Denver Office, no date.

Voorhees, I.S. History of the Klamath Project, Oregon-California, from May 1, 1903 to December 31, 1912. Unpublished manuscript on file at the Bureau of Reclamation, Klamath Basin Area Office, 1913.